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SUBJECT: Mentoring: The Guangzhou Way

¶1. (U) Summary: Nearly all 25 Entry Level Professionals at Congen Guangzhou serve in the consular section but the intent of management - and the desire of the ELPs - is to provide a varied experience, with mentoring integrated into every aspect of work. The Congen, mostly through a dynamic ELP working group and its interaction with senior management, has come up with a strong rotation program, within and without the consular section, conversations with/direct access to the CG via monthly meetings and participation in trips and events at the CGR, a DVC program with senior leadership in the Department and at missions abroad, and a thoroughgoing commitment to participate in Public Affairs programs to achieve the Secretary's vision of transformational diplomacy. In the process, ELPs have gained considerable experience in managing their own affairs while learning just how varied and demanding the work of the Foreign Service is. Delegating authority to junior level officers, while initially a necessity given the small number of mid and senior level officers in Guangzhou, has now become an ethos of the Guangzhou ELP experience. This cable reports the findings of an ELP committee about the success of current mentoring in Guangzhou and offers additional recommendations for improving how we accomplish our training objectives. End Summary.

Mentoring Starts in the Consular Section

¶2. (U) The rotation program at Congen Guangzhou begins in the consular section. Unlike in other parts of the China mission, which do not do immigration work (for historic reasons, all IVs are done here in the South), ELPs work in both the Immigrant and Non-Immigrant visa sections, either ACS or FPU, and spend one month in an office of their choice outside the consular section. Rotating into different sections within and without the consular section allows officers to learn about the full range of consular operations; the one month "out rotation" to a non-Consular section gives officers a feel for the work they may be doing on future assignments. Consular officers also rotate out in recognition that the Foreign Service wants them to develop broad skills that will allow them to manage mission-wide, not just consular-wide. An important benefit of the rotations is that Entry Level Professionals get to work closely with almost every mid and senior level officer at the Consulate. These interactions create opportunities for one-on-one mentoring. The rotation program is further augmented by an ELP Exchange Program, which allows ELPs in the Consular Section to exchange posts for two weeks with Consular ELPs elsewhere in Asia.

¶3. (U) The management of the rotation schedule is in and of itself a mentoring experience. ELPs create and manage the schedule, and then work with management to ensure it meets Post's needs. Delegating the day-to-day management of the schedule, gives ELPs valuable insight into the management challenges of staffing a large and busy consulate which is the size of France and has a population of over 220 million people. They witness first hand the constant balancing act between prioritizing high quality service to American citizens and our applicants, while creating a variety of professional experiences for Entry Level Officers.

The Role of the Consul General

¶4. (U) Direct access to the CG is another valuable cornerstone of the mentoring in Guangzhou. In addition to the monthly All-Hands Meeting, ELPs have a separate meeting with the CG to discuss issues of interest and concern which they suggest. ELPs use this meeting to ask about what is happening in our Consular district, the China Mission and Washington. Topics range from the high-level policy issues and career development to very specific advice, such as how to answer questions regarding Iraq (very carefully and in line with Department-provided guidance). These meetings play a valuable role in connecting ELPs to the events and shifts beyond the visa line.

DVCs with Senior Managers

¶5. (U) One very successful result of these monthly meetings has been the development of a DVC program whereby the CG invites senior leaders in the Department or at other missions to participate in DVCs with ELPs. Participants have included Ambassador B. Lynn Pascoe, now the UN Under Secretary General for Political Affairs, Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs Tom Christensen, and former Executive Director of EAP/EX Llewellyn Hedgbeth. The ELP Committee and the CG have also scheduled Beijing DCM Piccuta for a DVC in September.

Come to Dinner and Be Prepared to Talk

¶6. (U) In addition to these scheduled meetings, the CG often invites ELPs to dinners when senior level officials from Washington come to town. These gatherings provide ELPs access otherwise not available to them, about the priorities and challenges of decision makers in Washington. In addition, for the past 5 years, CGs in

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Guangzhou have invited ELPs to travel with them. These trips serve as a welcome break from a hectic visa line, and provide ELPs reporting opportunities as well as a chance to see what is happening beyond Guangzhou. For non-Consular-coned officers serving on a two-year Consular tour, these trips also serve as valuable lessons in trade craft for future posts.

Public Diplomacy and Transformation Diplomacy: The Keys to a Successful Career

¶7. (U) Guangzhou ELPs are active participants in the Public Affairs programs at post. This involvement not only allows PAS to run a robust program with a small staff, but it also allows ELPs opportunities to practice their public speaking skills, interact with students, and get a clearer idea of Chinese perceptions of the U.S. ELPs participate in the PAS's Weekly Forums on topics ranging from Blues and Jazz, to famous American speeches, to American architecture. They have also organized special events such as a Mock Court, U.S. Congressional election commentary and an Oscar Night. ELPs routinely judge English competitions at local universities and speak to students in our Consular district about student visas. And they get to suggest new programs for PAS consideration.

ELPs as Mentors

¶8. (U) Even though most Guangzhou ELPs are on their first tour, ELPs mentor Locally Engaged Staff, their peers and, at times, given the skills they have brought into the Foreign Service, even management. These opportunities are embedded in the functions ELPs play as team leaders for LES teams and as portfolio leaders. Even though some ELPs have prior management experience, leading and mentoring an LES team provides invaluable lessons on management in a multicultural environment. Peer mentoring and mentoring up take various forms, one salient example being a team-building exercise to be held this fall working on a Habitat for Humanity project in Guangdong to rebuild houses destroyed by flooding. The project was organized by an ELP who secured partial funding from the J. Kirby Simon Fund and

is working with other ELPs and management to raise the rest of the funding.

Portfolio Work Give ELPs Opportunities to Lead New Initiatives

¶9. (U) Managing a portfolio - such as AmCham, Chinese Language training for Officers, or education - in addition to interviewing also allows ELPs to propose to management improvements in the way things are done. For example, ELPs have suggested establishing an Amcham-type referral program for employees of key Chinese enterprises in the region, developed a robust Post language program complete with weekend immersion trips, and created an innovative software tool to help streamline the revocation writing process.

What's Next?

¶10. (U) Despite the various mentoring opportunities that already exist at post, ELPs have still voiced an interest in creating an even more structured mentoring program. One idea is to develop a mentoring group, consisting of mid and senior level officers who volunteer to meet with ELPs once every couple of months. Topics of discussion will include the work in which the mentors are currently engaged, advice on bidding, trade craft skills such as reporting, and how to balance family and work in the Foreign Service.

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